



WRESTLING MATCHMAKER — Don Glass, left, says the National Wrestling Alliance has been entering the ring more often in arenas this year. With him is Bob Scanlin, right, director of the Georgia Mountain Center in Gainesville, and wife Carol, at this year's District V meet of the International Assn. of Auditorium Managers in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. (AB Photo)

National Wrestling Alliance Positions Itself To Challenge Established WWF

By PATRICIA BATES

After a \$500,000 pump-up of its cable TV and pay-per-view shows since last year, the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA) is challenging the titan strength of the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) in arenas.

With the clout of Owner Ted Turner behind it, the Atlanta-based NWA will have 415 matches in the U.S. in 1989. The WWF had between 750-800 bouts in 1988 in

sports halls, said Don Glass, former WWF director of bookings who now handles that job for NWA.

The NWA also wants a part of the lucrative markets the WWF has developed in toy licensing to promotions. While the NWA has had more adult male spectators over the years, the WWF has traditionally had the kids because of its merchandising, said Glass. The NWA now has a contract for

souvenirs and novelties with an Atlanta firm, he said.

"When Ted purchased the NWA last November, it was virtually bankrupt, and he has made a financial commitment to it. He has already invested a lot of money, and says he will do more to make it a first class operation," said Glass.

Still, "there are some hall managers who won't offer me any dates, because of their affiliations with the WWF," he noted.

Turner and his Turner Broadcasting Systems (TBS) obtained the NWA assets from Jim Crockett Promotions. World Championship Wrestling (WCW) is the entity which handles business management and production for the NWA on the TBS SuperStation, for syndicated distributor Turner Program Services (TPS), and for Turner Home Entertainment (THE) videos.

"We've introduced more young wrestling stars to capture that audience that is under 21 years of age," said Glass. Currently, the NWA has 100 grapplers, of which 36-40 are top names; among the latter are Ricky (The Dragon) Steamboat, Lex Luger, the Road Warriors tag team, Rick Steiner, Sting and The Great Muta.

Some of the new faces in the NWA include the Skyscrapers tag team, Sid Vicious and Danny Spivey, "state mental institution patient" Norman The Lunatic, and Flyin' Brian.

The NWA has two tours coming up during the fall, one of which will be going into Florida markets. "We double-book by having two units," said Glass.

"I arrange our schedule about six months upfront, which is what the WWF did, too," said Glass. "We do well in our markets, like they do in theirs. I've always felt that two or even three wrestling leagues could survive in auditoriums."

The NWA usually has a limited Saturday time slot on local channels. "Wrestling is predicated on a rating share, with a four being high," said Glass. "In Memphis, the NWA was on Friday nights in syndication for years at 8 p.m., and we always have large crowds there."

In arenas, the NWA matches usually last two and a half hours with a 15-minute intermission, unless they are TBS specials. For the latter live broadcasts, carried four times per year, the cameras go non-stop.

The price for a floor seat is generally \$14 in the primary cities, \$12 in the secondaries, and \$10 in the tertiaries. Admission for children runs \$5-\$7.

"Wherever there is a group sales agent, then we have a \$2 discount," said Glass. "We also do marketing with radio stations and other media."

At a Fourth of July Appreciation Day in Fayetteville, N.C., the tickets were half-price at the Cumberland County Civic Center.

On memorabilia, the per capita spending is now \$3.50-\$3.80, mostly for programs and T-shirts. "We do our novelties in-house, but we ship direct to the buildings so their concessionaires can do the vending," said Glass.

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